

they serve the poor and the suffering, and practise compassion and forgiveness. Interestingly, one survey says that only 38 percent Westerners believe that man is good.

3. **Human security** lies at the core of a nation's security.

4. Sustainable development cannot be based exclusively on GDP. Robert Kennedy once said that GNP "*measures everything except that which makes life worthwhile.*" **Gross National Happiness** is as important as the GDP of a nation.

5. **Forgiveness** (and atonement) is a value that brings durable peace and conciliation in society. Forgiveness helps us to live with diversity. To forgive is not to forget; but to resolve not to take revenge. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa after the collapse of apartheid is a living example. As Mandela walked out a free man from Robben Island, journalists asked him if he hated his perpetrators for what they had done to him. He replied, "*Where was the time to hate?*"

Purpose of Education

The purpose of education cannot be to prepare students to succeed in examinations and career. Careers will keep on changing throughout one's life. Sociologists say it can be up to nine career changes by the time one reaches the age of 38. To add to these changes, the future is completely unpredictable. Scoring high marks in examinations does not prepare anyone to deal with the unknowable future ahead

I believe that the purpose of education is two-fold: to prepare students to face the **challenges of life**, and be **engaged citizens** – individuals who are citizens first, and whatever else later; citizens who think global but act local. Such a purpose will see the birth of leadership for sustainability.

Redefine Academic Rigour

Academic excellence, as commonly understand, is about scoring high marks in examination. To be able to succeed in a unknown future students will need to be equipped with survival skills that go beyond the 3 Rs. These competencies will enable students to understand complexity, think in an interdisciplinary way, collaborate with others, and participate in decision-making. They may be taught either as stand-alone subjects or be integrated with other subjects:

Character and values, because character will always beat brains

Persuasive **communication**

Collaboration and the ability to **listen**

Critical thinking and problem-solving

Creativity and innovation

Lifelong learning

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) for Sustainability – The “Triple Bottom Line” Approach

HEIs play a critical role in creating world citizens who are motivated to make the planet sustainable. Regrettably, sustainability has not received its due attention in colleges and universities. HEIs and even schools need to reflect on whether they are making a difference to the world's sustainability? I suspect the reason is because universities over-focus on academics and preparing students for careers. Instead, HEIs need a lot more sensitization in education for sustainable development in three specific areas: economic progress, social equity, and environmental sustainability. These three areas could form part of an overall study package regardless of the student's area of specialized focus.

HEIs need to go beyond providing degrees and careers by addressing global challenges and making meaningful contribution towards sustainable development in their respective regions. Apart from making their campuses green and sustainable, and imparting education in sustainability, HEIs could consider the following novel initiatives:

1. Provision of **think-tank** and **consultancy services**, and funding for **research** in social, environmental and human developmental aspects of sustainability. Key areas that merit attention are renewable energies, consumption patterns, and sustainable urbanization.
2. Setting-up **incubators for entrepreneurs**.
3. **Human capital development** through:
 - **Vocational skills** development in local communities, and up gradation of local labour skills.
 - Provision of **scholarships** to individuals from disadvantaged background, or from communities with low tradition of higher education.
4. Provide **solutions to social and ecological problems** in their respective regions, e.g., wetlands, land reclamation, drought, waste disposal and re-cycling, etc.
5. Encouraging setting up of **advocacy groups** on human rights, health care like AIDS and HIV, and poverty eradication.

6. Compulsory **community service** or internships with NGOs and industry by students for a period of three to six months should be made a graduation requirement.

Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies

Of the nine life-support cycles for sustainability of human beings and the planet, we have already crossed the danger levels of three – environment, nitrogen, and biodiversity. While we should continue to work earnestly towards bringing down the threat levels, we should intellectually accept that, possibly the damage is irreversible. As such, we should adapt to change and prepare elaborate strategies, technologies, and plans for adaption and mitigation. Some of the areas could be:

Development of alternative non-fossil fuels

Integration strategies to de-alienate migrants

Coping strategies, technologies, and plans to deal with damages due to greenhouse emissions, rise in temperatures, melting of glaciers and rise in sea levels. The rise in sea level in the San Diego region has been as high as 1.5 metres.

Conclusion

Competitive individualism and material success are dominant values of Western societies. Even the educated class in India and other Asian and African countries are following suit. Individualism is praiseworthy except that only a strong sense of community can give man his identity. The Africans call it **“ubuntu”** or humanity. *Ubuntu* implies that you are what you are because of other people. It is only when we interact intimately with the communities that are diverse that we get our identity.

Localism is a pre-condition for globalism. You cannot become a world citizen at the cost of losing your cultural identity. Our mind is shaped by culture, and culture gives us a reference point to understand others. Knowledge of one's religion and language constitutes nearly 75 percent of what is culture. In my experience, with the ferocious onslaught of consumerism, most children are fast forgetting their rich cultural heritage. Heritage is not mere sentiment. It is what forms a strong sense of identity and frame of reference.

Education is the only powerful tool for transformation. Transformation will happen only when schools and HEIs set an example in sustainability through syllabus, sustainable campuses, enhanced academic rigour, and an action plan to remedy or remedy the challenges on sustainability in their respective regions.